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The Legacy of the Samauri

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THE LEGACY OF THE SAMAURI.

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About four centuries ago, Akiyama went from Japan to study medicine in China. While there he saw a way of fighting called "Hakuda," consisting of striking and seizing. He learned the methods of "Hakuda" and twenty-eight ways of recovering a man from apparent death (Kuatsu). When he returned to Japan he began to teach it, but as he had but few methods he soon had still fewer pupils. Much grieved at his failure he went to the Tenjin Shrine, and there worshipped for one hundred days. One day, while out walking during a snow-storm, he observed a willow with branches covered with snow. Unlike the pine which stood erect and broke before the violence of the storm, the willow yielded to the weight on its branches, but it did not break. In this way reflected this Isaac Newton of Japan must "Hakuda" be practiced. Working on this principle he discovered 303 different methods of the art. So he named his school "Yoshin-Riu" (the spirit of the willow tree).

There is something singularly attractive to the oriental mind in such a principle, for it is in just this way that Japan has preserved her political and social integrity in spite of the overwhelming inroads on her commerce and interference in her foreign policy by the great powers of Europe. She has yielded to their influence by sending her students abroad, flattering the West by their eagerness to be taught. She has employed white instructors in her schools and colleges and in her army and navy, until, now that she has learned all that they can teach her, she bids them honorably to take themselves off and leave her to work out her own problems.

Jiu-jitsu is the art of fighting without weapons, and was the exclusive possession, until thirty years ago, of the

Samauri, or "swordsmen," the warrior class that corresponded closely to the Nobles and Knights of the middle ages in Europe. They had their pride of birth, their crests and coats of arms, and their own code of ethics, and when not engaged in actual fighting they practiced mimic war with bamboo swords, quarter-staves and Jiu-jitsu. There are many synonyms of this word and many translations of its meaning. It has been called "Yawara," "Taijitsu," "Kogusoku," "Hakuda," and "Kempo;" the last a Chinese word. It has been translated as "The art of seizing a man," "To gain by yielding or pliancy," "Soft business."

The actual origin is obscure and veiled by traditions in which the supernatural plays a prominent part. One account says: "In 1532, a sorcerer came unexpectedly to the house of Kakenouchi and taught him five methods of seizing a man. He thereupon took himself off, and none could tell whither he went."

Of the origin of "Ken" (Kempo) tradition says: Chingempin came from China after the fall of the Min dynasty and lived in Kokyo, in the Buddhist Temple, with three ronins: Fukuno, Isoyai, and Miura. One day, he told the three that in China there was an art of seizing a man that he, himself, had seen practiced. They worked together and became very skillful in it. This art probably included kicking and striking as well as seizing. The origin is usually traced to these three pupils, and the following principles were formulated as necessary:

1. Not to resist an opponent, but to gain the victory by pliancy.
2. Not to aim at frequent victory.
3. Not to be led into scolding (bickering), by keeping the mind composed and calm (empty).
4. Not to be disturbed by things.
5. Not to be agitated under any emergency but to be tranquil.

It is recorded of Fukuno (1671) that he so excelled, he defeated men much stronger than himself.

Miura Yoshin, a physician of Nagasaki, invented some new methods. Together with two medical pupils he found twenty-one ways of seizing a man and afterwards found fifty-one others. After its introduction into Japan it was undoubtedly changed and improved to fit the purposes for which the

Samauri used it, which was defense and offense for an unarmed man against one who was stronger, either physically, or by reason of being armed with a sword or club, or spear.

The Japanese never seemed to have thought of the art of boxing, either because their physique would be against



PLATE I

Page from a sketch book of Hokusai (1760-1849) showing—1, Defense against a man who seizes your (Keiko-gi) garment by wrist and elbow hold. Bending the second finger. 2, Wrist hold with both hands. 4, Finger hold beginning. 5, Finger hold, finish.

them, or more probably because it was too direct and frank a method of attack for the oriental mind, to whom a show of force seems as repugnant as a naval or military review is fascinating to the western imagination. Their mind works along less obvious lines; they find it more interesting and subtle to have a man use his weight and impetus to break his own arm,



PLATE II a

A leaf from Hokusai's sketch book showing the practice of Jiu-jitsu against men unarmed or armed with a sword or spear.

1, Wrist and elbow hold. 2, Wrist hold using the knee.



PLATE II b

3, Binding a fallen foe. 4, Defense against a sword. 5, Defense against a spear, a leg hold.

than to perform this office for him by main strength. They prefer to place an antagonist at their mercy by the pressure of a finger and thumb applied so skillfully that the strongest be brought to his knees. They would rather throw a man heavily by disturbing his center of gravity and apparently helping him to regain it, while really getting him in position to trip him up. They will learn to fall backwards in such a way that the enemy is sent flying across the room. Nor do they hesitate to make use of the clothing, seizing the obi, or girdle, and twisting the collar of the short jacket (Keiko-gi) so as to shut off his air supply. This choking hold is obtained

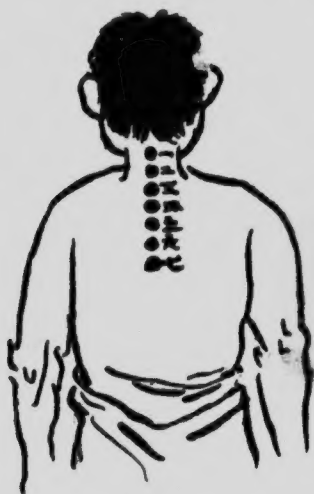


PLATE II

Katsu (Make alive). (*Translation*) When a man is killed by the collar or strangle hold put your left hand on his breast and middle finger of right on first joint of the neck and with the heel of the hand hit the seventh joint of the same. Thus you can bring him back to life.

in many ways but it is always the strangle, whether put on by the hands, forearms, leg or by twisting the clothing. (See Plate I). Some of the holds are shown in the sketch books of Hokusai of 1750,—that great artist and observer of Japanese life. They show methods of disengaging the hands of an adversary who is catching the clothing or clutching at the throat by twisting his wrist or bending his finger. In his drawings the pressure behind the elbow is shown, a great favorite in its many forms. Another series of drawings shows the way a man is thrown by catching his arm and the defense against a man armed with a sword. (See Plate II).

The art was jealously guarded by the "Samauri" and marvelous tales were told of their prowess—tales which I fancy they took good care to amplify and ornament. They were supposed by its practice to kill an opponent by certain sounds only, even if he were in the next room; they were supposed to have the power of the "fatal touch," killing instantly by placing one finger on the secret spot. They also had power to bring back to life those killed by whatever cause it might be. Among the imaginative, superstitious, and ignorant people, it is easy to see how such stories would gain in the telling.

It is now about forty years since the feudal system was abolished, and the "Samauri" became a class in name only.

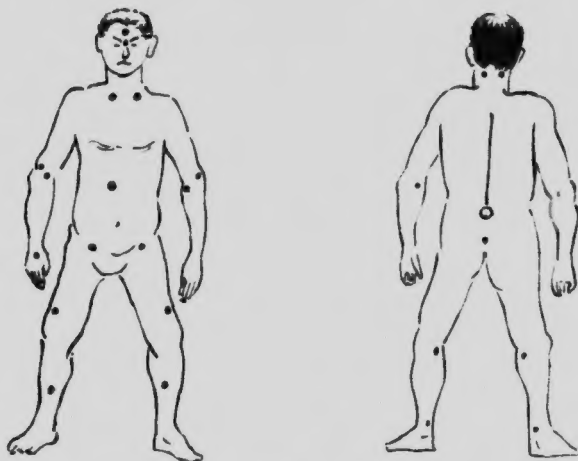


PLATE IV

and since that time these secrets have become common property. Books have been written on the subject and schools opened where it is taught and practiced, and it has even been adopted among the exercises for the cadets in the naval and military schools, in a greatly modified form called "Jiudo."

The recent exploitation and extravagant claims put forward for it in America have done much to raise and foster misapprehension as to its place and possibilities. When we think of the air of romance and mystery in which it was bathed in medieval Japan, and the attempt to bring these legends and fairy tales before a matter-of-fact, twentieth century American audience, through the medium of the press that cannot be said to show undue reticence when a chance for a

sensational story presents, it is easy to see how sharp would be the reaction among the wonder mongers when the facts began to appear and the possibilities and limitations were put in evidence.

The most carefully guarded secret was the art of "Kuatsu" (or bringing back to life). An illustration (PLATE



PLATE V

Jiu-jitsu applied to a man armed with a sword. Breaking the elbow and taking the sword from him.

III) from an old book on the subject will serve to show one principle on which the art is based. In this illustration the spots on the back are supposed to mark the joints between the vertebrae, the point of the middle finger of the right hand is placed at the uppermost one and the heel of the hand is struck smartly

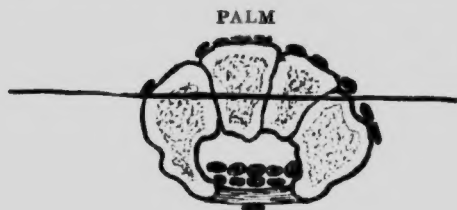


PLATE VI

Cross section of the wrist showing position of tendons and bones.

against the lower,—the left hand being placed on the breast. "Thus," the description goes on to say, "you can bring him back to life." This is evidently intended for a man who has been choked and is like the slapping on the back. Other illustrations show the knee in the hollow of the back and the hands brought under the dead man's arms with directions to press on the breast and shove (push) with the knee.

All show varieties of artificial respiration and none seem more direct and effective than Howard's or Sylvester's method, as taught to all our medical students.

The painful points are exceedingly interesting. Doubtless they are what were magnified into "fatal touches" in the years when the secret belonged to the "Samauri" alone. This illustration (PLATE IV) shows them as black spots. With but few exceptions, they do not seem to be especially well placed. Pressure is always made with the point of the thumb or fingers—not the ball, and pressure made in that way, on the inner side of the ankle, (over the posterior tibial nerve) is intensely painful.



PLATE VII

So with the inner side of the skin just behind the bone, as marked in the illustration. The reason for the great pain at this point is not so clear. The "funny bone" at the inner side of the elbow is familiar to everyone and there is a point at the side of the neck (just over the sixth cervical vertebra) that gives intolerable suffering if pressed upon properly. There are others, but these are among those most commonly used.

The circle on the back marks the spot where the knee should be placed in the practice of "Kuatsu." It is to be remembered that blows with the edge of the hand across the larynx, gouging and other tactics, which we bar in our boxing and wrestling, are important maneuvers. Kicking the face or groin, stepping on the leg or arm so as to break it are not only permissible, but are part of the art. It was never considered from the standpoint of a play, but as the last resort of a disarmed man whose life was threatened; and one cannot stop to consider the rules of fair play under such circumstances.

The word "Jiudo" is no novelty. It was already in use by one of the old schools. It means the doctrine of culture by the principle of yielding or pliancy. The Kano School adopts this word in preference to "Jiu-jitsu" for it is studied not only as a physical exercise, but as a moral and intellectual training. While the old form, "Jiu-jitsu," was studied solely for fighting purposes, Kano's new system aims to promote the mental as well as the physical faculties. While the old schools taught nothing but practice the modern "Jiudo" gives the theoretical

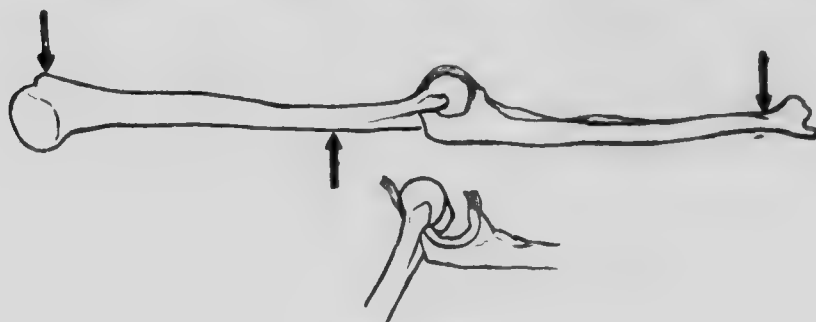


PLATE VIII

explanation of the doctrine, at the same time giving the practical a no less important place.

In the Kano-Riu the whole course is divided into two parts—the grades and under-grades. There are ten grades, proceeding according to the degree of training, while the under-grades are divided into three steps, "A" "B" and "C". All novices enter the "C" class of the under-grades and step up gradually to "B" and "A," whence, after attaining certain skill, they are admitted to the first grade. They go on from one grade to another up to the sixth, which is regarded as the last step in practical training. All the higher grades above the sixth are assigned chiefly to mental culture, which is the most profound part of the whole system. No one has yet attained

the tenth grade, which is considered to require fully ten years to attain, even with constant application. In Tokio there are two large institutions under the direct supervision of Kano himself. Every afternoon, many hundreds of boys and young men, mostly between ten and twenty years of age, gather there from all parts of the capital and practice until dusk with ardent zeal, but with complete discipline. It is the chief daily amusement of these town boys to go and study the art in a



PLATE IX

In this hold the arm is pulled across the back of the neck and the enemy is held in place to break his elbow joint by the grip on his throat and wrist and his own weight.

spacious hall adapted to the purpose. Periodically some special matches are arranged to test and promote the pupils. They are all taught gratuitously. No cost is incurred in the study, except for training suits. Pupils have to take the oath to obey the rules when they apply for admission. This school has now become so popular that the pupils studying directly or indirectly under Kano's instruction may be counted by many thousands. In the police department of Tokio all the constables are compulsorily trained in the system. It is due to the study of "Jiudo" that the Japanese police, in spite of

their small stature, are so skillful in seizing malefactors. Rudyard Kipling, in "The Edge of the East" (Times, July 2nd, 1892,) describing the British Jack ashore at Yokohama, writes- ".....he gets drunk, falls foul of the local policeman, smites him into the nearest canal, and disposes of the question of treaty revision with a hiccup. All the same, Jack says he has a grievance against the policeman, who is paid a dollar for every strayed seaman he brings up to the Consular Courts for overstaying his leave, etc. Jack says that the little fellows

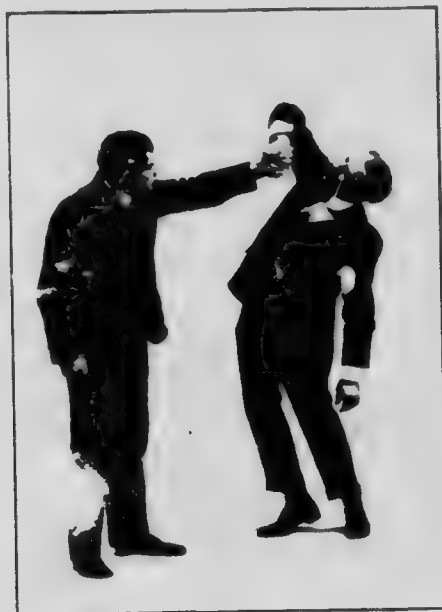


PLATE X

This hold is got by grasping the enemy's right hand with the left, lifting and spinning under the arm to the position shown in the illustration. This hold is not shown in Japanese books, but was developed from them by O'Brien.

deliberately hinder him from getting back to his ship, and then with devilish art and craft of wrestling tricks, 'there are about a hundred of 'em and they can throw you with every qualified one,' carry him to justice."

In Tokio there are now over thirty places where it may be learned. Kano, the acknowledged master of the art, has done more than anyone else to collect the literature of the subject and his pupils teach throughout all Japan.

The art was introduced to America by J. J. O'Brien, who, as Inspector of Police, at Nagasaki, became interested in it,



PLATE XI

(a) Position of the bones showing the crossing of the radius and ulna, and the direction of the twist.
 (b) Position of the arm when the hold is well taken.

studied it, and finally came to America with K. Inowe, giving public exhibitions. Unfortunately it looked so fierce and brutal that the vaudeville theaters could not then stand it, so that he has since been teaching it in private to select pupils, numbering among his disciples many illustrious names, from President Roosevelt down. He has still further developed "Jiu-jitsu" by adapting holds to our clothing, and by using it against a man armed with a pistol as the Japanese used it against the sword; and incredible as it may seem, he can take a revolver from the strongest man before he can shoot and often before he can draw his weapon. (SEE PLATE V).

To the anatomist "Jiu-jitsu" is of the keenest interest. There is no series of movements in which the strength and



PLATE XII

This hold begins by grasping the wrist and hand of the enemy with your right and bending the wrist into flexion. To escape the pain he instinctively bends his elbow and so jumps into the hold as shown in the illustration. This hold was also worked out by O'Brien along Japanese lines.

weakness of joints have been so cunningly considered. If we imagine the wrist cut across (about the middle) to show the position of the tendons, we will see that on the back they are scattered and placed flat against the bones, while on the palm they spring out against the ligament that holds them in their

sheath. (Plate VI). The difference in the strength between flexion (bending) and extension (straightening) is almost as two to one: (12 kilos to 7 kilos) and when the hand has been bent over, even that small power of extension is greatly reduced. If the hand can be got in that position, it will be easy to hold it and it is one of the favorite "Jiu-jitsu" grips, occurring continually in illustrations, either alone, or in combination with others: when put on by an expert there is a vicious side twist to it that never fails to bring an antagonist to his knees. (PLATE VII).

Another favorite joint on which they work is the elbow, and power is supplied in one of three ways. This joint is a hinge, that locks when the arm is straight, making a long, rigid lever with its weak point at the center. (PLATE VIII). If pressure can be applied downward at the wrist and shoulder, the fulcrum being at the elbow, the anterior ligament will tear and the joint become useless. But why, says the expert, waste power

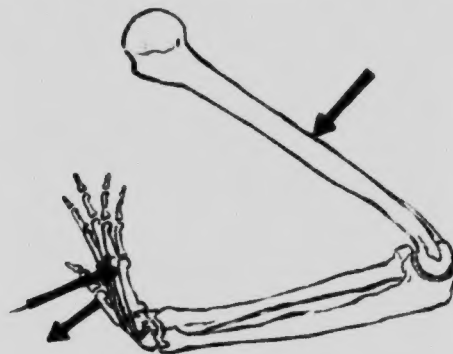


PLATE XIII

Position of the bones in Plate XII. The power applied on the hand and upper arm prevents straightening of the elbow.

on the shoulder when the man's own weight can be utilized? And so many of the holds use the victim's own weight to break his arm. (PLATE IX).

In another lock the arm is turned so that the bones of the forearm are crossed into extreme pronation. Power is then applied so that the radius is wrenched out of its socket and the arm rendered useless or wrist ligaments torn. (Plate X).

Perhaps one of the most fiendish is that in which the wrist is bent as in the first hold described, and the counter-power applied on the upper arm, so that any attempt to straighten the elbow is accompanied by excruciating pain and rupture of ligament, and dislocation of metacarpal bones. The

additional twisting of the hand by depressing the fingers and lifting the thumb certainly does tend to increase the discomfort of the position. (PLATES XI, XII AND XIII).

The principles are comparatively few and simple, but it is in their application that the difficulties appear. Many of the movements take weeks to learn even imperfectly and the majority of people could probably never attain to any degree of perfection in the use of more than the simplest. The idea of teaching such a system by mail is so absurd as to be unworthy of serious consideration.

The holds are so arranged as to pass from one into another almost automatically. If one is successfully resisted, the opponent usually struggles into a worse one. It is very difficult and even dangerous to demonstrate many of them



Spreading the arms of an opponent who catches at the clothing.

with one unacquainted with their possibilities, because he may continue to struggle when it is too late, and so do himself serious injury. The expert knows when it is taken properly and always yields in time by slapping the leg or arm, as a token of defeat. Again, if the hold is not pushed to its limit, the novice is sure to think he could have got away in any case, so that a just estimate of its practical value in actual warfare is hard to get. That a small, puny man could by its means become invincible when pitted against a powerful, active athlete is most unlikely, but with anything like equal

conditions, it should be a most valuable means of defense, especially in the form as modified by O'Brien.

In its old form it has no place on our calender of sports, for it is not a game but rather a way of equalizing an apparent disadvantage in fighting and it cannot be classified among forms of exercise that could be taught in a school or college, except for purely military purposes, as the French "Savate" (or foot boxing) is combined with the bayonet exercise in the military school at Joinville. In its modern form as taught in Japan by Kano and his pupils it is like a combination of collar and elbow wrestling and tumbling, and so should be a distinct addition to our repertoire of exercises.



A wrist hold (on the left). The squatting position assumed for most of the holds described in Japanese works.

